



The ISC Newsletter

International Society of Cryptozoology

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Editor
J. Richard Greenwell

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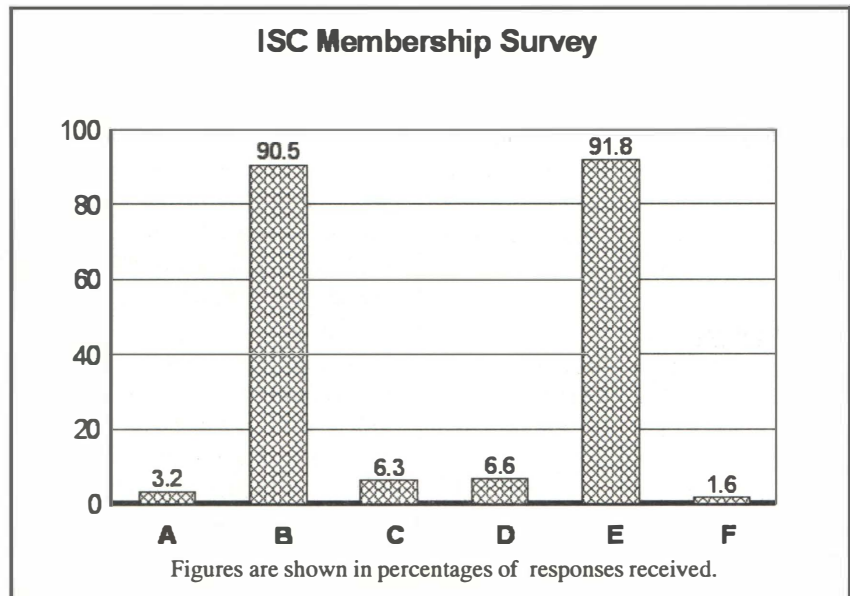
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RESULTS OF THE SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP SURVEY



The ISC membership was surveyed for opinions on the Society and its publications by use of a specially-designed questionnaire. Two of the questions concerned whether the journal and newsletter were considered "too lightweight and superficial," "about right," or "too scholarly and academic." The above shows, in graph form, that (A) 3.2% of the respondents thought the journal is too lightweight, (B) 90.5% thought it is about right, and (C) 6.3% thought it is too scholarly. Responses on the newsletter were similar: (D) 6.6% thought it is too lightweight, (E) 91.8% thought it is about right, and (F) 1.6% thought it is too scholarly.

In order to better understand the needs and expectations of the membership, the Secretariat surveyed all Society members by means of a specially-designed questionnaire. This questionnaire was inserted in the last 1990 newsletter, which was mailed to all active members, and was also included in a later renewal reminder mailed to all 1990 members who had not yet renewed for 1991. The survey expenses were therefore minimal.

The Society ended its 1990 membership period with a total of about 760 active (i.e., paying) members (plus about 40 institutional subscribers, mainly academic libraries). All 760 active members received the questionnaire. A total of 385 questionnaires were returned. This represents a very

high response rate of almost 51 percent. Of these 385 returned questionnaires, 379 of them (98.4 percent) came from members renewing for 1991, and 6 of them (1.6 percent) came from members who specifically stated that they would not be renewing their memberships.

In a separate 1991 renewal appeal mass-mailing to several hundred former members — from between 1982 and 1989 — a different but similar questionnaire was enclosed. About 50 of these former members re-joined the Society as a result of the mass mailing, and 59 questionnaires were returned. For statistical purposes, the above 6 non-renewing 1990 members were consolidated with the 59 former members from 1982-1989, giving a total of 65 former or non-renewing members. These 65 individuals

gave numerous reasons for not renewing their memberships (see below).

The data were computer-coded and ran through a statistical program by James E. King, an ISC member and professor of psychology at The University of Arizona. The following breakdowns summarize the responses from both active and former members.

First, active and former members were asked to rank, in order of importance, the three main services provided by the Society — the journal, the newsletter, and the annual membership meeting. The results were as follows:

Active Members

Journal	211 =	55.7%
Newsletter	167 =	44.0%
Meeting	1 =	0.3%

Former Members

Journal	37 =	56.9%
Newsletter	27 =	41.5%
Meeting	1 =	1.5%

Both active and former members ranked the journal as more important than the newsletter. With active members, the journal ranked almost 12 percentage points higher. It is apparent that the Society's scientific journal is a strong membership motivator. The annual meeting ranked a distance third with both groups. This is almost certainly due to the world-wide dispersal of the Society's membership, and the inability of most members to attend annual meetings.

What did members actually think of the two publications? Did they perceive them as "too lightweight and superficial," "about right," or "too scholarly and academic"? The journal results are as follows (for presentation purposes here, the terms "light" and "deep" are used):

Active Members

Too light	12 =	3.2%
About right	343 =	90.5%
Too deep	24 =	6.3%

Former Members

Too light	3 =	4.6%
About right	48 =	73.8%
Too deep	14 =	21.5%

The newsletter results are as follows:

Active Members

Too light	25 =	6.6%
About right	348 =	91.8%
Too deep	6 =	1.6%

Former Members

Too light	12 =	18.4%
About right	45 =	69.2%
Too deep	8 =	12.3%

An overwhelming majority of active members — over 90 percent — thought that both the journal and the newsletter are "about right." There thus seems no need to change the orientation of either publication to any great extent.

Among former members, this percentage dropped to 73 percent for the journal, and 69 percent for the newsletter. There was a statistically significant higher percentage of former members who considered both the journal and the newsletter to be "too deep." This perception of the publications by former members may account for some of the membership loss incurred over the years, although there are also many other reasons why members do not renew (see below). However, it is probably better for the Society to lose members who consider its publications "too scholarly and academic" than to lose members who think the publications are as they should be.

What were the most important attributes of the publications as perceived by members — factual reliability, quantity of material, appearance/quality/style, or timeliness of publication? Members were asked to rank these attributes in order of priority. By far the highest score was attained by "factual reliability." The complete scores are as follows:

Active Members

Reliability	307 =	81.0%
Quantity	19 =	5.0%
Appearance	7 =	1.8%
Timeliness	46 =	12.1%

Former Members

Reliability	59 =	90.7%
Quantity	3 =	4.6%
Appearance	1 =	1.5%
Timeliness	2 =	3.1%

Over 80 percent of active members regarded factual reliability as the most important attribute of the publications. Quantity and appearance/quality/style were of much lesser importance, and timeliness of publication received only 12 percent.

With former members, reliability scored even higher, over 90 percent, and timeliness scored a much lower 3 percent. Thus, the proposition that former members did not renew because of late publications is refuted. Based on the above data, it appears that former members were actually far more concerned about the reliability of the publications than over the timeliness of their appearance.

What about the educational background of the membership? We asked members to indicate if they had a) no college education, b) some college or a B.A. degree or equivalent, c) a Masters degree or equivalent, or d) a doctoral degree or equivalent. Twenty-five active members and 8 former members did not respond to this question. Of the remainder (354/57), the results are as follows:

Active Members

No college	30 =	8.5%
College/BA	162 =	45.7%
Masters	85 =	24.0%
Doctorate	77 =	21.8%

Former Members

No college	8 =	14.0%
College/BA	31 =	54.3%
Masters	13 =	22.8%
Doctorate	5 =	8.8%

Two observations may be made here. First, the membership of the Society is composed of relatively educated individuals, inasmuch as over 90 percent of the active member respondents have at least some college background, and over 45 percent hold graduate degrees. The educational background of former members is similar, but there is a trend towards a lower educational level. It seems that those who do not renew their memberships in the Society are more likely to have received less academic training. This seems to be in line with the concern expressed by former members (above)

that the orientation of the Society's publications is too scholarly.

Members were also queried on their income level. The categories were: up to an annual income of US\$20K, 30K, 40K, 50K, 60K, and above 60K. As might be expected, many individuals did not respond to this question. Indeed, some considered it impertinent. A total of 136 active members — 36 percent — and 43 former members — a phenomenal 66 percent — left the response blank. Of the remainder (243/22), the results were as follows:

Active Members

Up to 20K	50 = 20.5%
Up to 30K	46 = 18.9%
Up to 40K	50 = 20.6%
Up to 50K	35 = 14.4%
Up to 60K	10 = 4.1%
Above 60K	52 = 21.4%

Former Members

Up to 20K	3 = 13.6%
Up to 30K	6 = 27.4%
Up to 40K	5 = 22.8%
Up to 50K	3 = 13.6%
Up to 60K	2 = 9.0%
Above 60K	3 = 13.6%

Society members seem to represent all income levels, and the data are of little utility. It may be noted, however, that a quarter of the activemembership appears to have an income level above US\$50,000 a year, which probably explains the high response to what has become a traditional annual appeal for financial support. (A record 298 members made some kind of donation to the Society during the 1991 membership period, representing almost 40 percent of the entire membership.) As to former members, because 66 percent failed to answer the income question, the above data is of little statistical value.

The last question in the survey concerned the geographical location of members. These were divided into: (USA) Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, Southwest, Northwest, Canada, Latin America, U.K., Europe/Continent, Africa, Asia, and Australia/New Zealand/Pacific. All respondents completed this question. The geographical breakdowns

are as follows:

Active Members

Northeast	106 = 28.0%
Southeast	31 = 8.2%
Midwest	60 = 15.8%
Southwest	39 = 10.3%
Northwest	29 = 7.7%
Canada	14 = 3.7%
(Total N.A.	279 = 73.6%)
L. America	2 = 0.5%
U.K.	38 = 10.0%
Europe/Cont.	45 = 11.9%
Africa	4 = 1.0%
Asia	6 = 1.6%
Aus/NZ/Pac.	5 = 1.3%

Former Members

Northeast	13 = 20.0%
Southeast	6 = 9.2%
Midwest	14 = 21.5%
Southwest	7 = 10.7%
Northwest	8 = 12.3%
Canada	2 = 3.0%
(Total N.A.	50 = 76.7%)
L. America	1 = 1.5%
U.K.	7 = 10.7%
Europe/Cont.	5 = 7.7%
Africa	0 = 0.0%
Asia	1 = 1.5%
Aus/NZ/Pac.	1 = 1.5%

These data confirm what has been noted for many years, that the largest single component of the Society's active membership is centered in the U.S. Northeast, followed by the Midwest. This is also reflected in the responses from former members. It should be remembered that the above numbers do not represent the numerical distribution of the membership, as only 51 percent of the questionnaires were returned. However, the percentages — not the numbers — are thought to be fairly accurate, as they are similar to those resulting from an informal geographical membership study undertaken by the Secretariat in 1989, which gave: U.S.A. = 70 percent; Canada = 5 percent; Europe = 20 percent; all other countries = 5 percent.

As shown below, although the response was "optional," almost three-quarters of the responding active members and former members were willing to identify themselves by name:

Active Members

Name given	282 = 74.4%
No name	97 = 25.6%

Former Members

Name given	47 = 72.3%
No name	18 = 27.7%

The next — and last — section addresses the reasons why former members did not renew their memberships. As indicated above (first and second paragraphs), 65 former members returned their questionnaires, and completed a section designed for them only. This section listed 12 possible reasons for non-renewal of membership — based on information provided to the Secretariat by former members over the years.

Former members were asked to check whichever reasons applied, and they could check as many reasons as they wished. The 65 respondents made 161 checks. Every respondent checked at least one reason. Many checked two or three reasons. The highest number of reasons checked by a single individual was nine. The following breakdown, ranked by the highest number of checks made, gives a clearer picture of the reasons for non-renewal of membership:

Reasons for Non-Renewal of Membership	Number of checks
---------------------------------------	------------------

I couldn't afford/justify the expense.....34 = 21%

I was disappointed by the progress of cryptozoology in general; I thought more discoveries would be made.....24 = 15%

I was too busy/absorbed with other things that interest me.....19 = 12%

I was too busy/absorbed with personal affairs (i.e., college, marriage, job change, residence change).....17 = 11%

I didn't see much benefit in relation to the cost.13 = 8%

I have only a casual interest;
I don't need continual
updating.....11 = 7%

I found the constant delays
in publishing the newsletter
and journal too frustrating10 = 6%

I found the Society and its
publications too scholarly
and academic for my tastes.....8 = 5%

I joined because I was curious,
but I had no intention of
remaining a member
permanently.....8 = 5%

I simply never got around
to renewing; there was
no specific reason.....7 = 4%

I find that I can keep up with
most cryptozoological news
through newspapers and
magazines6 = 4%

I found the Society and its
publications too lightweight
and superficial for my taste.....4 = 2%

It is apparent that there have been many reasons for non-renewal of membership, as all 12 possible reasons listed were checked. However, the "cannot afford the expense" reason was checked more times than any other, receiving 21 percent of all checks. It is thus probable that the Society has tended to lose members for whom US\$30 is a not insignificant amount. Unfortunately, the income data provided by former members is insufficient to fully validate this statement (66 percent ignored the income question). Presumably, we can expect to continue losing in the future those members who are forced to make critical expense decisions.

The reason expressing "disappointment with the progress of cryptozoology in general" — not specifically with the Society — received the second largest number of checks, 15 percent. This validates what has been observed over the years. Every year, a certain number of individuals join the Society expecting sensational discoveries to occur quickly, and they rapidly lose interest when "nothing

happens." Such individuals tend to have less formal education, and they are also in lower income brackets, which is in line with the previous data indicating a higher non-renewal rate among persons having less formal education.

Many former members have stated over the years that they simply became heavily involved in other things that interested them more, putting cryptozoology aside, and this is validated by the number of checks given to that reason, 12 percent. The same goes for the number of checks by those who have been heavily involved in personal affairs, which received a moderate response rate of 11 percent (one respondent added: "Marriage from HELL!!"). "I didn't see much benefit in relation to the cost," and "I have only a casual interest; I don't need continual updating" received low marks, only 8 and 7 percent respectively.

It has been proposed that the chronic delays in publishing the Society's newsletter and journal have resulted in a high membership loss. However, this reason was checked only 10 times — 6 percent — demonstrating that the proposition has no validity. This is in line with informal comments made by many members over the years to the effect that when they received the publications was far less important to them than their quality. This is also in line with other data, above, which show that only 12 percent of active members consider "timeliness" to be the most important factor concerning the publications.

The last five reasons all received 5 percent or less of the checks, and need not be discussed individually. In summary, it can be concluded that former members have let their memberships lapse for a wide variety of reasons, with no single reason, even the financial one, being the overwhelming factor. However, financial considerations seem to have been the main concern of those who dropped-out of the Society.

The final observation that could be made is that we are relying on information provided only by those who took the time and trouble to complete and return their questionnaires. One could

speculate that perhaps those who did not bother to return their questionnaires have different perspectives from those who did. This is a problem that confronts all social scientists relying on survey data. However, past studies by social psychologists concerning the attitudes of survey non-respondents versus respondents indicates that there is little variation. The above data probably reflects fairly accurately the preferences, perspectives, and composition of the entire membership.

No major surprises resulted from the survey data, and there would probably be little purpose in conducting multivariate analysis or applying other statistical techniques.

Many interesting comments were made by individual survey respondents, and these appear in a separate article in this newsletter. □

QUOTES

"Streets full of water. Please advise."

Robert Benchley
American writer and humorist
(in telegram sent to his agent upon arrival in Venice)

"I think is not improbable that man, like the grub that prepares a chamber for the winged thing it never has seen but is to be — that man may have cosmic destinies that he does not understand."

Oliver Wendell Holmes
U.S. Supreme Court Justice
Law and the Courts
Speeches 103 (1913)

"No phenomenon *is* a phenomenon until it is an *observed* phenomenon."

John Archibald Wheeler
American astronomer and cosmologist
"Delayed-Choice Experiments and the Bohr-Einstein Dialogue," paper read on June 5, 1980, to an American Philosophical Society/Royal Society joint meeting.

COMMENTS BY ISC SURVEY RESPONDENTS

When returning their survey forms to the Secretariat, many members wrote comments and opinions concerning the Society and its publications. Most of these were positive. While space does not permit publication of all the letters and notes received, a representative selection of 35 are included below in alphabetical order — including some responses by the Editor — for the interest of readers. A few of the letters have been shortened and/or edited for clarity. These letters are being published together here, rather than in the regular Cryptoletters section.

I would be willing to accept a reduction in the quality of appearance and presentation of the newsletter if it could be published more punctually. However, I think the quality of the journal should be maintained as it is.

Anonymous

Could various papers presented at the annual ISC membership meetings be published in the journal?

Anonymous

They are. On the average, one publishable article or field report results from an annual membership meeting. Editor.

Late publications are annoying and frustrating. It is important that they arrive on time. Also, perhaps too much newsletter space is taken up with Society news. Let's not talk about us. Let's talk about cryptids. The more news and discussion on the subject the better. I am generally pleased with the Society, and, except for late publications, have no serious complaints. There is much that we are doing right, because we have the right goal: the furtherance of knowledge in this hitherto nearly unexplored field.

Anonymous

Sometimes newsletters do seem to contain much Society news — this one, for example! But we are a society, not just

a publication, and such news helps to keep us together as a cohesive body. Also, we often have to editorially juggle competing items of importance, and Society news sometimes gets lumped together in particular issues. Editor.

My only concern about this questionnaire is that you will use it to cut back on existing benefits and services. I'm not too keen on questions involving "ratings."

Mark Angelcyk
Kewanee, Illinois, U.S.A.

I feel that the newsletter's gray paper is a bit too dark. I would prefer an ivory or off-white paper. Also, viewing photos on such a color would be easier on the eyes. The layout, printing, typesetting, and photos are excellent. I hope that does not change!

Sheila O. Barrera
Rahway, New Jersey, U.S.A.

Several members commented on their dislike of the newsletter's gray paper. We therefore changed it to a lighter color, commencing with Vol. 11. You see, we do listen to what members say! Editor.

I would like to see specialty journals and/or newsletters devoted to one particular topic, such as lake monsters or giant unknown sea creatures. What about a one-time edition of an extensive photographic portfolio pertaining to all aspects of cryptozoology, with updates every few years?

Jose Bisconti
Ozone Park, New York, U.S.A.

Although these suggestions are reasonable, such special editions would involve added expenses, which the Society, with its current bare-bones, survival budget, could not possibly afford. If the Society's financial situation were to improve sufficiently in the future, such special editions might become possible. Incidentally, we did once dedicate an entire newsletter — an expanded 16-page is-

sue — to one topic, the coelacanth fish, on the 50th anniversary of its discovery (see Newsletter, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1989). Editor.

I would like to see a members' book service for publications of interest to us.

Robert Campbell
Weymouth, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

Members often ask if the Society sells books. With the exception of the Field Guide to the Sasquatch (\$4.95 + P&H), all the Society sells are its own publications. However, members should feel free to use the Cryptoletters section to announce books they are either selling or seeking. If there were enough interest, a separate "Exchange Column" or even "Personal Column" could be created to accommodate such correspondence. Editor.

I was elected an Honorary Member of the Society in 1982, of which I am very proud. The journal is a valuable scientific publication, and I find it absorbingly interesting. I wish the Society every success for a long and continued existence.

Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer
East London, South Africa

Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer discovered the coelacanth fish in 1938 (see Newsletter, Vol 8, No. 1, 1989). Editor.

I am quite pleased with my membership, and can think of nothing that I would change.

Randy R. Garlipp
Nebraska City, Nebraska, U.S.A.

Since I don't get around to reading your publications for a while, when they arrive is of little or not concern to me. I was sorry to read that the interesting Wood's Animal Facts column has come to an end.

G. M. Garner
Everett, Washington, U.S.A.

The newsletter could be *more* academic, but I like all aspects of the journal.

Tobias Goodman
Westerly, Rhode Island, U.S.A.

I think the Society and its publications have definitely filled the void that existed in the dissemination of cryptozoological information prior to the 1980's. Late publications are frustrating and annoying, but I understand that the Society is doing the best it can. The important thing is that the Society continue. I very much enjoy reading both the newsletter and the journal, and I learn a lot from them.

J. Richard Greenwell
Tucson, Arizona. U.S.A.

And I very much enjoy editing them — and I learn a lot too. Editor.

Keep up the good work. I always look forward to the newsletters and the journals.

John Hall
Stockton, Cleveland, England, U.K.

I like the ISC logo with the okapi, except for one thing: it should have "established 1982" in the lower blank spot in the circle. In my opinion, it would look much better, and be more informative.

Roger Hansen
Spring Valley, California, U.S.A.

This idea was, in fact, discussed in the 1980's by the Board of Directors, but nothing ever came of it. However, your letter stimulated the Board to review the matter once again, and I can report that your proposal has been adopted, starting with Vol. 11 of both publications. However, because of the limited space available in the logo's circle, the addition will simply read "estab. 1982." Again, we do pay attention to comments and suggestions from members. Editor.

Ideally, I would like to see — and believe there are enough newsworthy or research articles to justify — publication of the newsletter monthly and the journal quarterly. A newsletter every two

months and a journal twice a year would be nice, but I'd settle for the current schedule *on time!*

Sergei Hasenecz
Los Angeles, California, U.S.A.

First of all, where would the money for all these extra publications come from? We can barely cover expenses right now. We would have to raise dues to \$50 or \$60, and lose a lot of members as a result. Apart from that, there is actually insufficient quality material to publish a journal of our size more than once a year, and a newsletter more than quarterly. It can be done, of course, but the quality of journal articles and the reliability of news material in the newsletter would drop proportionally. Our highest priority has always been to provide the most authoritative and the most reliable material possible with the limited resources at our disposal. There are already enough publications providing extensive cryptozoological material of questionable veracity.

When an ISC member reads his or her newsletter or journal, however, he or she can feel confident that most if not all of the unreliable material has been filtered out. For those who are less concerned with reliability, and prefer instead to have more publications, some of those other sources may be preferable to them. As you have stuck with us for 6 years now, I think that, deep down, you still prefer us. Editor.

I think the newsletter and journal are concentrating on too many smaller animals that I consider to be only marginally cryptozoological—even considering official definitions. I don't think most of the general membership are interested in unknown small lizards and mammals, or in insects.

Ronald D. Humble
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

That is true, but we try to cover the whole waterfront, large and small, famous and obscure. Also, one of the main determining factors with the newsletter is the availability of suitable material. Obviously, we can't publish information if it

is not sent to us. It is likewise with the journal; we are very dependent on what manuscripts authors submit for publication. Editor.

Given the amount of dollars I might expend in your support, which would profit you most: a Sustaining Membership for myself, a gift membership for somebody else, or a back issue purchase?

Woodson K. Johnson
Gaithersburg, Maryland, U.S.A.

That's a difficult question to answer. From the Society's perspective, a donation (making you a Sustaining Member for the year in question) is always the simplest, as it does not involve further expense, energy, or time on our part. However, a gift membership helps to broaden our base, and may result in future donations or back issue purchases from that new member. Your third option — a back issues purchase — is always the best deal from the perspective of the member, as he or she gets materials in return. However, we at the Secretariat cannot set ourselves up to place value judgments on these options. All we can say is that they are all greatly appreciated. Editor.

Some of the esoteric scientific descriptions and terms appearing in the journal are not in my normal vocabulary. Some layman's review might help to add some easier readability. Very scientific jargon may be quite specific in many fields, and sometimes it can be helpful to others if some non-expert descriptions of terms were added. I work in a jargon-filled refinery process engineering field, and I constantly see the need to be considerate of the less informed reader.

Paul A. Larsen
Park Forest, Illinois, U.S.A.

We always try to get this message across to authors, specially those in highly specialized fields. One problem is that our journal is an interdisciplinary one — as it should be — and is almost unique in that its authors and readers may be historians or herpetologists, linguists or geologists. Just how far should authors compromise their professional discus-

sions by “simplifying” them for those not versed in their particular fields? Certainly they would not do so when writing for journals in their own fields. Thus, very often, they forget that others may not actually grasp all their professional terminology. Even when they are aware of this, they may decide that the burden is on the reader to understand it. I think this situation requires a balance. We shall therefore continue to request authors to be as clear as possible for the non-specialist without compromising their professional approach. Editor.

As far as appearance is concerned, as long as the text is legible, the photos are clear and sharp, and paper is durable, I am satisfied. In other words, you need not produce a “premium” or “deluxe” publication. The lateness of publications worries me only insofar as it evidences the financial troubles of the Society. I would hate to see the Society fold.

Jonathan McGirt
Carrboro, North Carolina, U.S.A.

I would like to see a 16-20-page newsletter; 12 pages seems too short when members only receive 4 issues a year. Perhaps you can expand the Cryptoleters section, which I always find interesting. I am also concerned, due to the nature of the above survey questions, that the Society’s publications might start taking on a popular, mainstream tone. Please keep publications on a scholarly level. After all, I joined a scientific society, not a hobbyist’s club.

Michael J. McGovern
Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.

Fear not; the ISC publications are not going to change in terms of scholarly content. Editor.

I think you are doing a fine job with the newsletter and journal — just keep doing it. In my opinion, both publications accomplish what they are supposed to accomplish.

Dan Lyons
Raleigh, North Carolina, U.S.A.

I have no concerns about the Society’s publications. The journal is always excellent, while the newsletter is refreshingly light reading on a great variety of interesting subjects. I’m sorry you have dropped Wood’s Animal Facts.

Raymond Manners
Arlington, Virginia, U.S.A.

Keep up the good work! Don’t worry about being late. I can accept publication delays providing the quality is there.

Bruce H. Offord
West Palm Beach, Florida, U.S.A.

The ISC publications are one of the few serious sources of information on a topic of very keen interest to me. Thanks for the good work. Please keep it up!

Thomas A. A. Oleson
San Diego, California, U.S.A.

Don’t shrink the publications. If anything, expand if you can. Please continue using quotes as fillers. Excellent idea.

Gene Ondechek
Newport News, Virginia, U.S.A.

With the journal, please give proper references for articles referred to in the text — at least year and volume number for articles in other periodicals. This is needed for following up the references. I know that the journal’s Instructions to Authors requests this, but some authors have not done it.

Sally C. Parsons
Eastbourne, England, U.K.

You would be shocked if you knew how many hours we have had to spend in the university library looking for authors’ missing references — sometimes to no avail. I’m glad others also feel it is important. Editor.

Just keep on doing what you’re doing!

Francis B. Randall
New York, New York, U.S.A.

It is exceedingly unfortunate the Society doesn’t have access to more funds so that field investigations into the existence of cryptozoological animals could be maintained. Reading about such efforts is particularly satisfying.

David L. Robbins
Berthoud, Colorado, U.S.A.

I agree. Wouldn’t it be nice if we had a small fund of several thousand dollars — assuming all other expenses were covered — which could be allocated to the best two or three fieldwork proposals every year? Some important projects could be carried out at relatively little cost. Editor.

I greatly enjoy both the journal and the newsletter. While timeliness is nice, factual reliability is paramount to the success of the ISC and the acceptance of its future findings. Keep up the good work!

Robert Ruh, Jr.
Versailles, Kentucky, U.S.A.

Perhaps the only disappointment for many ISC members is that, over a decade after the founding of the Society, the main cryptozoological “mysteries” are still mysteries!

Ennio Scannapieco
Salerno, Italy

True, but we should also remember that the Society is not actually responsible for discoveries, or the lack of them — individuals are. Editor.

Do not let yourself be too concerned about running late with publications. This is, I feel, just the kind of personal, old-fashioned Society touch most members happily accept. British and other European societies of the 19th century, the heyday of societies, were never punctual — not even the German ones! Over-punctual “Prussian” precision — as of larger university journals — will not necessarily ensure good results nor readers’ acceptance.

Gunter G. Sehm
Hamburg, Germany

I feel that the newsletter and journal should include more updates on specific cryptozoological animals, and should include more historical accounts of classical cryptids, such as the Nandi Bear and the Queensland Tiger. It seems that everything involves Sasquatch or Nessie, or things like the giant gecko or the coelacanth.

Mark E. Thorsland
Altamont, New York, U.S.A.

The content of the journal is, of course, totally dependent on what authors submit. As for the newsletter, it is designed to provide news; that is, updates of recent events. Thus, historical reviews have only been included as background to coverage of recent events. I would not feel comfortable merely reprinting historical accounts which are already available to members in numerous books. As for the particular cryptids reported on in

the newsletter, we cannot control the news — only report it! Editor.

It would be nice if the journal could be published more often, like twice a year or quarterly. The Society is of great use to all people interested not only in cryptozoology but also in related issues, such as the environment, conservation, ethics, etc.

Gerard van Leusden
Utrecht, The Netherlands

Concerning your newsletter filler quotes, your taste is simply mediocre. I sent you a few that were knockouts, but you didn't print them. The ones you do use swing from the irrelevant to the trite. Also, your housekeeping information takes up close to one-fourth of the newsletter. I want news about strange and exotic beasts, not this great chunk about money woes, etc. in each issue.

Stephen Walker
Warrensburg, Missouri, U.S.A.

Quotations have been used as space fillers based on their length — that is, the number of lines needed to be filled at the time — rather than on their quality. Society and membership news does take up quite a bit of space, varying from issue to issue. However, the newsletter is not published in a vacuum; it is the publication of a society, and it is therefore natural that a certain amount of Society news is included. I have examined some other society newsletters from time to time, and have found that, in comparison, ours is actually on the short side concerning Society affairs. Editor.

Thank you for all your years of hard work. We appreciate it.

Joseph W. Zarzynski
Wilton, New York, U.S.A.

EDITORIAL

COLONEL FAWCETT AND THE GIANT ANACONDA

"We were drifting easily along on the sluggish current not far below the confluence of the Rio Negro when almost under the bow of the *igarite* there appeared a triangular head and several feet of undulating body. It was a giant anaconda."

Thus began the description of a legendary 1907 encounter in Brazil by an intrepid British explorer, Lt. Col. Percy H. Fawcett. It continued: "I sprang for my rifle as the creature began to make its way up the bank, and hardly waiting to aim smashed a .44 soft-nosed bullet into its spine, ten feet below the wicked head...With great difficulty I persuaded the Indian crew to turn in shorewards...We stepped ashore and approached the reptile with caution...As far as it was possible to measure, a length of 45 feet [13.7m] feet lay out of the water, and 17 feet [5m] in it, making a total length of 62 feet [18.9]. Its body was not thick for such a colossal length — not more than 12 inches [30cm] in diameter — but it had probably been long without food."

Now, as many ISC members will know, the maximum length herpetologists credit the anaconda is about 30 feet (9.1m). In fact, in 1910, through the New York Zoological Society (now the Wildlife Conservation Society) naturalist — and U.S. president — Teddy Roosevelt offered a



Lt. Col. Percy H. Fawcett

\$1,000 reward to anyone who could produce a live snake measuring at least 30 feet (9.1m) in length. The reward stands today at \$50,000 — as good an index of inflation as I have ever seen.

Although the reward remains uncollected, there have been many claims of such giants. In 1948, Brazil's great herpetologist Afranio do Amaral, based on years of information he had collected in the Brazilian interior, granted the anaconda a maximum length of somewhere between 39 and 42 feet (11.9m and 12.8m), which is still at least 20 feet (6m) short of Col. Fawcett's claim. However, the longest measured and accepted length — from a 1940's encounter by a Colombian petroleum geologist — is "only" 37 feet, 6 inches (11.4m), and even this has recently been questioned.

Nevertheless, it is not unreasonable to propose that a few individual anacondas may occasionally reach or exceed lengths of 40 feet (12.2m) or more. But what about Col. Fawcett's 62-foot (18.9-m) claim? Who was Col. Fawcett, anyway?

In 1906, the War Office seconded Fawcett to the Royal Geographical Society to act as a referee in a territorial dispute between Bolivia and Brazil, a dispute which was threatening to erupt into war. This dangerous mission involved boundary delimitation work in areas where human life had a low price. It was undertaken towards the end of the infamous Rubber Boom — which had precipitated the territorial dispute — which took many thousands of lives through malnutrition, disease, accidents, and murder. Fawcett's work over 4 years also took him into very remote areas of the western Amazon, some of them completely unexplored at the time and inhabited by hostile Indian tribes, tribes with which he had numerous encounters (the respect he expressed for the Indians in his writings, incidentally, was way ahead of its time). But Fawcett was a tough individual, and a survivor.

After his official duties ended in 1910, he retired from the British Army and continued to explore the Amazon until the outbreak of World War I in 1914 — when he was forced to borrow money from a German friend in order to make his way back to England to re-join his regiment! He served with distinction in the Royal Artillery, returning to Brazil after the war.

By now his attention had focused on finding a “lost city” in the Brazilian interior — such as Hiram Bingham had done with the 1911 discovery of Machu Picchu in Peru — for he had become convinced, based on both remains he had found and accounts from Indian informants, that a pre-Columbian civilization had once flourished in the Amazon Basin. His expeditions searching for evidence of such a “lost city” in central Brazil continued until 1925, when, with his older son Jack and Raleigh Rimell, he set out on a new, two-year expedition — never to be heard from again.

Rumors and reports of Fawcett's survival or death continued to come in until the 1950's, but none of them provided any real proof. In 1953, Brian, his younger son living in Peru — who had by then completely given up any hope of his father's survival — edited and pub-

lished his father's posthumous autobiography (*Exploration Fawcett*, Hutchinson, London, 1953; U.S. edition: *Lost Trails, Lost Cities*, Funk and Wagnalls, New York) — with the “final chapter” missing.

Anyway, what concerns us here is the giant anaconda report. Numerous skeptics, including some herpetologists, have derided Fawcett because of his obsessive belief in such an unknown Amazon civilization and its “lost city.” This belief, it has been stated — and I heard this remark again quite recently — makes Fawcett an unreliable reporter.

On the other hand, we must also bear in mind that Fawcett was a surveyor, and anyone who was an expert at measuring international boundaries could surely measure a snake accurately. Furthermore, most of the geographical details in his book have turned out to be accurate. And now, so does his much maligned belief in an Amazon civilization.



Lt. Col. Percy H. Fawcett's reported encounter with a 62-foot (18.8-m) anaconda in the Brazilian Amazon in 1907, as depicted by his son Brian Fawcett.

It now turns out that the oldest pottery in the entire Western Hemisphere has been excavated in the Amazon, overturning the long-held belief — I have emphasized this word purposefully — by most archaeologists that the Amazon did not have the resources to support such a culture. In late 1991, a multi-national archaeological team published evidence to the

contrary, in the form of radiocarbon-dated pottery fragments decorated with painted patterns (A.C. Roosevelt, R.A. Housley, M. Imazio da Silveira, S. Maranca, and R. Johnson, Eighth Millennium Pottery from a Prehistoric Shell Midden in the Brazilian Amazon, *Science*, Vol. 254 [5038]: 1621-24).

Accelerator radiocarbon and thermoluminescence dating indicates an age of between 7,000 and 8,000 years ago, at least 1,000 years older than any other New World pottery, and about 3,000 years earlier than any Andean and Mesoamerican pottery. Conventional archaeological thinking — despite a century of evidence to the contrary, which was dismissed as “non-scientific” — had assumed that complex cultures had originated in the Andes region, and “decayed” in the tropics. “The findings illustrate,” the authors stated, “the frailty of evolutionary scenarios that rely on negative evidence...”

In an interview with *The New York*

Times, Anna C. Roosevelt, the team leader and curator of archaeology at a Field Museum of Natural History, in Chicago, stated: “The accepted theory for many years was that this habitat was simply too poor, too low in resources to support large, dense populations of plants, animals or humans. We've come to realize that much of what we once thought

about Amazonia is wrong.” Astonished by the discovery, as are many New World archaeologists, is Craig Morris, of the American Museum of Natural History, in New York. In an interview with the *Times*, he stated: “Ten years ago, the Amazon Basin would have been the last place people would have expected to find evidence for early pottery-making cultures.”

Dr. Roosevelt — who happens to be Teddy Roosevelt’s great-granddaughter — undertook her Brazilian research in the hope of refuting the old belief about Amazonia, and now states that the evidence indicates that the area could easily have supported large prehistoric civilizations, and that the vast plant biodiversity found there today didn’t just happen, but was the result of thousands of years of human cultivation.

So, as obsessive as he was, and although he didn’t have all his interpretations right — O.K., so he believed in an Atlantis connection, but who didn’t believe in Atlantis in those days? — and although he never found his “lost city” — at least, not that we know of! — it now turns out that Fawcett *was* fundamentally correct about an unknown civilization in the Amazon. Thus, I for one will no longer tolerate character attacks on his person because of that belief, which just happened to be 80 years ahead of its time. Indeed, in his book, Fawcett wrote: “Unfortunately, I cannot induce scientific men to accept even the suppo-

sition that there are traces of an old civilization in Brazil.”

This doesn’t mean that his claim of a 62-foot (18.9-m) anaconda is necessarily true. There are other things about his report that bother me. For one thing, I am doubtful about the reported behavior of such a large anaconda, that it *left* the river when encountered. I would expect such a snake to *enter* — or, in this case, to *remain in* — the water in order to make its escape.

Furthermore, it is extremely doubtful that a 62-foot (18.9-m) anaconda could properly perform on land because of the tremendous biomechanical stresses imposed upon it. The main reason anacondas can get so large in the first place is because of their spending so much time in a liquid environment, where the effects of gravity on biological systems are greatly reduced. Obviously, the larger a snake gets, the more time it would have to spend in the water. I took this up with herpetologist Aaron M. Bauer, and the conclusion was that any anaconda measuring about 50 feet (15m) would have to spend virtually *all* of its time in the water.

This problem might be offset somewhat by the reported gracility of Fawcett’s snake, at only 12 inches (30cm) in diameter. However, this description is much more python-like (and we should note that Fawcett had once served in Ceylon — now Sri Lanka — were pythons

abound). It is extremely doubtful that a 62-foot (18.9-m) anaconda, even a starving one, would be so skinny. Indeed, Dr. Bauer’s calculations are that a theoretical 50-foot (15-m) anaconda would have to be at least 30 inches (76cm) in diameter, and a more reasonable 40-foot (12-m) anaconda would still have to be at least 24 inches (61cm) in diameter. Fawcett’s specimen was reportedly only half that diameter, but 50 percent longer.

Did Col. Fawcett purposefully exaggerate its length, or even fabricate the entire incident? Perhaps, although he also mentioned a very reasonable 12-foot (3.6-m) anaconda, and his description of a large bushmaster at 9 feet (2.7m) — about the same size as the one I once encountered in the Peruvian Amazon — is credible, and he himself acknowledged that larger ones were known. Another possibility is that some sort of misinterpretation or misprint occurred somewhere along the route between his hand-written account of the incident and its publication in book form almost half a century later.

We probably will never know the truth for sure about this report, and we must remain cautious about what seems to be such an impossible claim. But let’s also remember that, until the 1980’s, it was also thought “impossible” for the Amazon to have harbored a lost civilization.

J. Richard Greenwell
Editor

CRYPTOLETTERS

The Editor welcomes letters from readers on any topic related to cryptozoology, but reserves the right to shorten them or make slight changes to improve clarity or style, but not meaning.

To the Editor:

A friend recently sent me an article which mentioned the Mexican Onza (see *Newsletter*, Vol 5, No. 1, 1986), and which included a photo of one shot in 1986. My friend remembered an experience I had once told him about, and he thought the article validated my sighting.

We are both amateur naturalists and active in birdwatching. The sighting I am about to report on occurred in late July, 1973, on the Pan-American Highway in Sonora, Mexico, between Hermosillo and Guaymas. I was on independent study from Hiram College in Ohio, and living with the family of a local newspaper reporter. His name was Jesus; I don’t remember his last name, although that could be determined; I think it was Moreno.

I had been in Sonora since mid-June, and had experienced the late-July rains. Jesus, myself, and a couple of friends had decided to drive down to Guaymas to get away. We were driving south, following a car with California license plates being

driven by a woman.

Suddenly a large, strange-looking cat crossed right in front of the woman’s car. It had a strange “boxy”-looking head, very long legs, and a long body and tail. It moved very quickly. I thought it looked like a cross between a wolf and a mountain lion (puma). The fur was sandy/tawny colored. The animal was about 5-6 feet (1.5-1.8m) in length, not counting the tail. Much to our surprise, the woman immediately pulled over, jumped out, and ran after the animal into the thick desert brush.

This incident occurred within the context of superstition in Mexico, the then current fascination with Carlos

Castenada, and my ongoing discussions with Jesus about superstition versus bringing Mexico into the 20th century. The reaction of Jesus and his friends was one of almost total terror. I wanted to stop and follow the woman into the brush. They thought I was crazy, and wouldn't stop at all.

I believe they really thought that the animal was magical — a *brujo* (wizard) changed into a wolf-like creature, or some such thing. I myself didn't know what to make of it. For many months, it occupied my thoughts, and sometimes my own thinking went in that direction.

Now, on seeing the photo of the Onza, I am certain that that is what I saw in 1973.

Joe Emery
Cleveland Heights, Ohio, U.S.A.

An interesting report. It would be nice if that woman surfaced one day and told us what she found. Editor.

To the Editor:

Enclosed is a fun product from my local supermarket: Shark Bites, chewy fruit snacks that feature the Megamouth shark (see *Newsletter*, Vol 10, No. 2, 1991). One box is unopened and still contains the plastic glow-in-the-dark Megamouth figure. The other box contains only the fruit snacks — I gave the figure to my girlfriend Emily. However, if you look closely at the fruit snacks themselves before chewing them, you will notice that some of them also depict the Megamouth shark.

I believe this may be some kind of milestone for cryptozoology, and possibly a harbinger of things to come should

other major cryptids be confirmed.

Corby J. Waste
Greenbrae, California, U.S.A.

We tasted the fruit snacks — strictly for scientific purposes — and they met with our approval. The Megamouth figure has joined the assortment of lake monsters, Bigfeet, coelacanths, thylacines, and other cryptids in a display vitrine at the ISC Secretariat. By the way, Corby and Emily were recently married. Editor.

To the Editor:

At last! A hard-boiled detective novel with a cryptozoological theme. In George C. Chesbro's *The Fear in Yesterday's Rings* (Mysterious Press, New York, 1991, \$4.99), dwarf detective Mongo is presented with a string of bizarre killings that seem somehow connected to a traveling circus in the Midwest.

The police suspect a serial killer, the tabloids proclaim a werewolf, but Nate Button, editor of "one of the cryptozoological journals," explains to Mongo that the real culprit is the Lobox, an extremely intelligent wolf-like canid thought extinct since the Pleistocene. The bad guys, a vague consortium financed by international intelligence agencies, have developed the Lobox through retrogressive breeding as a perfect human-killing machine.

I won't give away the ending, except to say that cryptozoologist Button meets his Lobox. In memorium, Mongo funds the Nate Button Cryptozoological Research Center at the Bronx Zoo.

Kathryn Lance
Tucson, Arizona, U.S.A.

To the Editor:

I am a new member of the Society, and I recently read an article in *Backpacker* magazine about the so-called Bigfoot. I have been interested in this for many years, and I do believe that something like that does exist, although I have never had an encounter of my own until recently, and then only with footprints.

My wife Carelle and I own a cabin in a remote section of the Adirondack Mountains of upstate New York. On October 21, 1990, while we were up there for a few days deer hunting, my son discovered some rather large and unusual footprints. They appeared to be human, rather large — about 16-17 inches (40-43cm) and where barefoot in an area and at a time of year when no person in his right mind would be barefoot.

Although the tracks could have been hoaxed, I don't think that they were. The ball of the foot showed where this thing ran, and in some places where it walked. I have hunted and trapped all my life. I have a good sense of humor, but I am not joking about this, and would not attempt a hoax of this kind. Also, we have seven other witnesses.

While I have never professed to be an expert tracker — or expert anything — I have looked at tracks all of my life. These didn't appear to be faked.

Norman Scutt
Unadilla, New York, U.S.A.

"There are things that are so serious you can only joke about them."

Niels Bohr
Danish Physicist

The ISC Newsletter is not issued for permanent scientific record, and thus, for the purposes of zoological nomenclature, does not fulfill the criteria for publication as defined in the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature.

Archival Material: Members are encouraged to send copies of cryptozoology-related newspaper reports, popular magazine articles, and scientific papers to the ISC Secretariat. Recently published material is particularly welcome, but old and obscure items are also of interest and potential importance. It is better for the Secretariat to have several copies of an article rather than none at all, so when in doubt, please send. All submissions should clearly indicate a full reference; e.g., name of publication, date, and — in the case of scientific papers — volume and page numbers. In most cases, because of the volume of mail, members will not receive an acknowledgment of receipt, but all items submitted are carefully read, are often used in the *Newsletter*, and are preserved for posterity.

Society Purpose and Policy: The International Society of Cryptozoology was founded in 1982 in Washington, D.C., and is incorporated and operates under the laws of the District of Columbia. It is also recognized by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service as a tax-exempt, non-profit scientific organization. The Society serves as a focal point for the investigation, analysis, publication, and discussion of all matters related to animals of unexpected form or size, or unexpected occurrence in time or space. The Society also serves as a forum for public discussion and education, and for providing reliable information to appropriate authorities. The Society takes no position on which of these supposed animals may actually exist. Opinions may be expressed by individual members, but they are personal ones, and do not reflect any official or unofficial Society policy. Likewise, the Society takes no position concerning the authenticity of any given cryptozoological evidence or events.

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Field Medical Advisor: Michael J. Manyak, M.D., Department of Urology, George Washington University Medical Center, 2150 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037, U.S.A. Tel: 202/994-4002; Fax: 202/994-3671. Members planning fieldwork, particularly in tropical areas, are encouraged to contact Dr. Manyak for free medical/health care advice.

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